

## THE INTRODUCTORY PARAGRAPH AND THESIS STATEMENT

**Sample Question:** To what extent did the Civil War constitute a revolution in American society?

### STRUCTURING AN INTRODUCTORY PARAGRAPH:

1. **Setting:** Establish the **setting** of the essay. Briefly introduce the reader to the subject and time frame.
  - ✓ Example: "The Civil War, occurring between 1861 and 1865, was the most devastating conflict in American history."
2. **Bridge:** Provide a **bridge** that establishes your basis for analysis.
  - ✓ Example: "In determining whether the Civil War was a revolution in American society, one must assess the extent to which society was changed by the war."
3. **Partition:** Provide a **partition** that establishes three major sub-topics you plan to discuss.
  - ✓ Example: "*Politically*, the war established the supremacy of the Republican party in national politics for much of the next fifty years. *Socially*, the war saw significant gains in African American rights. And *constitutionally*, the war established the supremacy of the federal government over the states."
4. **Thesis:** Finish paragraph with a **clear thesis statement** that establishes the purpose of the essay.
  - ✓ Example: "Thus, the Civil War did, in fact, represent a political, social and constitutional revolution in America."
  - ✓ **Always underline your thesis when you write for this class.**

### THESIS TYPES:

**Simple thesis:** "The Civil War was a revolution in American society." (Rating: minus)

- ✓ Thesis is far too simplistic. It contains no partition or analysis.

**Complex-simple thesis:** "In some respects, Americans experienced profound changes during the war. After the war, it was clear that society had also been changed dramatically in a number of important areas." (Rating: minus)

- ✓ The analytical aspect (bridge) of the thesis is promising. However, *no partition is established*. The thesis does not establish *how* American society was changed by the war.

**Simple-split thesis:** "The Civil War was a revolution in America politically, socially, and constitutionally." (Rating: check)

- ✓ Thesis provides a **partition**: politics, society, and the Constitution.
- ✓ Thesis lacks an explanation or general analysis in each of the three areas in the partition.
- ✓ Note: This thesis would be a "simple thesis" if the question already contained a partition.

**Complex-split thesis:** "Politically, the war established the supremacy of the Republican party in national politics for much of the next fifty years. Socially, the war saw significant gains in African American rights. And constitutionally, the war established the supremacy of the federal government over the states. Thus, the Civil War did in fact represent a political, social and constitutional revolution in America." (Rating: plus)

- ✓ Thesis contains all necessary components: analysis, bridge, partition, and thesis.

### Key Points to Remember when Writing DBQ:

1. READ the question, skim the documents looking at the sources then READ the question again.
2. Carefully read the documents making notes of outside information in the margins.
3. READ the question this time trying to formulate your thesis.
4. With your thesis in mind, begin your introductory paragraph. Have a setting, a partition, a position if needed and head into the thesis. Underline your thesis.
5. Use all the documents UNLESS you are not sure of one or how to use it. It is better to omit it than use it incorrectly.
6. They do NOT (should not) be in order. Use them as they apply to your argument.
7. There is no need to quote at length from the document...just refer to it but in a manner that supports your argument and that is consistent. Don't just "drop" it in. (doc A)
8. Be a name dropper...be a show off...prove your knowledge of the time period! Don't assume the reader knows what you're thinking. You must prove that you can think/write outside of the documents.